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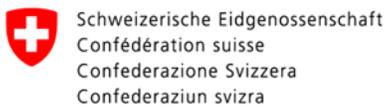
FIRST INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEES

Boosting capacities and partnerships for implementation

Report - 23 to 27 January 2017



With support of



First International Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees

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I. Introduction

1. The International Trade Center (ITC), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Bank Group (WBG), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) jointly organized the First International Forum for National Trade Facilitations Committees (the Forum), held from 23 to 27 January 2017 at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva, Switzerland.
2. More than 300 participants from some 70 countries attended the week-long meeting. The participants represented public sector agencies such as the Ministry of Trade and the Customs Authority as well as the private sector. Women represented one third of participants.

II. Opening

3. Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi, UNCTAD Secretary-General, opened the Forum underlining the importance of supporting the National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) and partnership in trade during the present trade slow down and the increasing anti-globalization trend globally. He added that through well-functioning and sustainable committees, countries would be able to make trade, easier, faster, and cheaper. Mr. Kituyi highlighted that: UNCTAD had for many years supported interagency collaboration and public-private partnership with a view to promoting trade, improving trade compliance and revenue collection as well as promoting good governance. In this context, it was important to align trade facilitation and investment facilitation to work in tandem focusing also on developing infrastructure, technical skills and entrepreneurship, thus leading to building productive capacity, in developing and least developed countries. Finally, he reaffirmed that UNCTAD, together with the other development partners, stood ready to continue its close collaboration with developing and least developed countries to successfully implement the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) and ensure the successful establishment of NTFCs, thereby boosting partnerships both at national, regional, and international levels.
4. Mr. Roberto Azevêdo, WTO Director-General in his address, noted that the imminent entry into force of the TFA showed Members' commitment, following the Bali negotiations, to improve the global trading system. The Agreement envisaged streamlining, standardizing, and simplifying customs procedures and thereby reducing trade costs around the world and boosting exports. The full implementation of the TFA would bring a higher level of predictability and transparency to customs procedures, which would mostly benefit SMEs. The TFA provided flexibilities to developing and least developed countries for their implementation of the Agreement. Mr. Azevêdo underlined the role of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) as a resource for accessing support, as well as important information, on available technical assistance. He stressed the importance role of the NTFCs and urged co-operation among the members of the committee to ensure full implementation of the Agreement.
5. Ms. Arancha González, ITC Executive-Director, placed focus on the position of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in terms of the implementation of the TFA. She mentioned that the Implementation of the TFA would create concrete change, including the cost and ease of doing business, especially for SMEs. Ms. González also pointed out that NTFCs played a key role in ensuring the national benefits of the TFA by creating a negotiating platform for the private sector and government agencies, and by communicating those needs to the international organizations. She said that the public-private representation in the NTFCs put them in the best position to relay the needs of the business community,
6. Mr. William Gain, WBG Global Program Manager, noted that trade facilitation was a critical economic driver for all countries through stimulating an increase in bilateral trade, export diversification, foreign direct investment, and

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improved competitiveness. The benefits of implementation of the TFA were disproportionately greater for developing and least developed countries as their traders were typically facing higher costs to export. The implementation of the TFA would potentially improve the exporting and importing environment for the private sector. He encouraged governments to not only modernize border procedures but to implement policies that would encourage competition among trade in goods and services.

7. Ms. Ana Hinojosa, WCO Director, concluded the session by discussing the importance of the social and economic role of customs in the implementation of the TFA. She outlined that in its role, Customs protected society by facilitating legitimate trade, acquiring critical data on economic flows and collecting revenue and supported the TFA's call for standardization, harmonization, transparency, and predictability.

III. Session 1: The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement: State of Play and Road Ahead

8. Ms. Rosenow (WTO) stated that the WTO TFA would enter into force once 110 Members had ratified the Protocol of Amendment and had deposited the instrument of acceptance at the WTO. Each ratification process was subject to its national constitution or national procedures of ratification. Each Instrument of Acceptance had to be approved by the WTO Legal Affairs Division before it was formally deposited to avoid any errors in the drafting of the instrument. This was a very brief process that was usually completed within 24 hours.
9. Ms. Rosenow gave a brief overview of the TFA, and highlighted the flexibilities in the Agreement for developing and least developed countries, including the category A, B, and C notifications. Members were urged to submit their A, B and C notifications as soon as possible and while there were no deadlines for the implementations of the provisions of categories B and C, there was an obligation to submit the notification with the exact indicative dates, in accordance with the flexibility provisions of the Agreement. Countries had as much time to implement B and C measures as needed, as there were no deadlines for implementation. It was not possible to remove provisions from category A, once it had been notified.
10. Ms. Rosenow confirmed that the timeline for the implementation of measures notified in categories B and C submitted before entry into force of the Agreement, started from the day of entry into force of the Agreement. Ms. Rosenow confirmed that every single measure of the TFA had to be attributed to a category with a corresponding date for implementation of that provision. Should countries experience difficulties regarding their obligation to implement the categories at the due date, opportunities for technical assistance programs would be made available by donors and organizations.
11. She explained that the one-third of WTO Members that did not ratify the Agreement would still need to ratify it. However, the Agreement was not legally binding until a country had ratified it and deposited the Instrument of Acceptance at the WTO Secretariat.
12. Ms. Rosenow stated that WTO TFA Facility website contained contact details of donors and support agencies to which any questions and requests could be addressed. While Article 23 of the TFA which covered NTFCs did not fall under the special and differential treatment for developing and least-developed countries, it was still possible to acquire assistance in relation to the establishment and management of the NTFCs. She mentioned the newest UNCTAD Technical Note as a good tool for understanding the implications of the entry into force of the TFA for developing and least developed countries.

IV. Session 2: Technical assistance for the implementation of Trade Facilitation reforms – International Agencies

13. The Moderator, Mr. Jan Hoffmann (UNCTAD), underlined the importance of technical assistance in working to reach the goal of full implementation of the TFA in each country Member. He indicated three key messages extracted from

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the data on the financial assistance in trade facilitation i) the funding for the Aid for Trade Facilitation had grown significantly from the start of the TFA negotiations; ii) although the fund had increased, it had not grown as much as the infrastructure investment required; and, iii) while in middle-income countries the biggest share of the financial assistance received was attributed to trade facilitation, for the least-developed countries the basic needs such as health, infrastructure, education also required financing. He concluded by ensuring the commitment of the organizations for full implementation of the agreement for all Member states.

14. Ms. Shamika Sirimanne (UNCTAD), highlighted that the cost of 'red tape' was significantly higher for developing countries and that any cost advantages they may have were lost due to numerous obstacles encountered at customs. She noted that implementation of the TFA involved a lot of national agencies and as the Agreement was quite technical, there was a threat of miscommunication among agencies. She also noted that the benefits of trade facilitation, such as increased revenue collection, could be observed through the customs automation programs such as ASYCUDA. Other benefits included the increased participation of the private sector in international trade.
15. Mr. Mohammad Saeed (ITC), in his presentation, outlined ITC's trade facilitation-related work. ITC collaborates with policy makers, private sector and trade and investment institutions by offering advisory services, capacity building, trade and market intelligence and market linkages. ITC supports trade facilitation reforms from a business perspective by using five pillars: research and analysis, improving inter-agency cooperation, enhancing transparency and access to information, improving the efficiency of cross-border procedures, and working directly with SMEs to build their capacity. For their implementation programs, ITC adopted a comprehensive approach beyond the TFA, acting as an intermediary between private and public institutions, ensuring stakeholder collaboration and adopting a regional approach. Mr. Saeed confirmed that the role of NTFC was to bring together various national agencies including private sector and agreed that there was the need of making funding more accessible.
16. Ms. Mikiko Ollison (WBG), introduced the work of World Bank related to trade facilitation in terms of data analysis and diagnostics, technical assistance, building infrastructure, research and data products and partnerships. World Bank provided support in both hardware and software aspects with a goal of facilitating trade and cutting cost. She briefly overviewed common challenges and critical success factors for implementation of TFA. Ms. Ollison agreed that creating and maintaining an NTFC was crucial for successful implementation and stated that WBG has an advising role and it was the government's obligation to commit to ensuring sustainable NTFC.
17. Mr. Matthew Bannon (WCO), presented the WCO MERCATOR program that was a strategic initiative to support sustainable and effective implementation. He broadly discussed its framework, partners, objectives, and tracking tools. He then proceeded to describe various WCO instruments and guidelines that were used to assist with the implementation of provisions of the TFA and explained the program's phased implementation approach. He concluded by giving capacity building support statistics around the world.
18. Mr. Jonathan Werner, Coordinator in the Executive Secretariat for the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), gave a brief overview of the EIF, its practical involvement with trade facilitation and a focus on the NTFCs. He put forward that EIF was mandated as a coordination mechanism on the Trade Facilitation for technical assistance in the least-developed countries. The objective of the EIF was to boost trade capacity, assist countries in including trade, international development strategies and plans and coordinate technical assistance through trade. EIF conducts the Diagnostic Trade-Integration studies (DTISs) that help countries identify comparative advantages and priority sectors. It also offered capacity building, supports interagency coordination, and assists countries' efforts with resource leveraging and matchmaking.
19. Mr. Frank Van Rompaey, the representative to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva in the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), highlighted the importance of standards and quality infrastructure for trade facilitation and the need for improved testing, inspection, certification, and harmonized conformity assessment procedures. He then presented UNIDO's programs to help testing entities to overcome challenges in internationally recognized conformity assessments in compliance with Sanitary and Phytosanitary

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(SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) measures. UNIDO's assistance programs include research and publication, help to comply with technical regulations, boost SPS/TBT enquiry points and direct support to SMEs.

20. Mr. Dovi Amouzou, International Development Expert in the African Development Bank (AFDB), stated that the main goal for the AFDB was the regional integration and continued with explaining the role of the AFDB in terms of implementation of the TFA, its activities and prospects for the future of implementation of the TFA. The regional integration stood on two pillars: developing regional infrastructure and supporting industrialization and trade. Mr. Amouzou then discussed the programs for regional integration and other activities such as research, technical assistance and political dialogue. The 5 priorities of the bank were providing electricity, food, industrializing, integrating trade, and improving the quality of life. Bank's main approaches for development programs were investing in hardware and providing capacity building that is directly linked to the trade facilitation.

V. Session 3: Support for the implementation reforms -Bilateral Donors

21. The moderator, Mr. Matthew Bannon (WCO), opened the session by affirming that donor coordination was the cornerstone to respond to globalization and the development agenda. He claimed that there was less fragmentation nowadays compared to eight years ago. Nonetheless, there were still some challenges to overcome, including duplication, contradictory advices, and lack of interagency cooperation. Mr. Bannon invited the panelist to share information about ongoing initiatives and lessons learned.
22. Ms. Sushila Hirani (Her Majesty Revenue and Customs-HMRC, United Kingdom) presented its organization's WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Capacity Building Programme as a multiyear tailor-made programme, which counted with up to £3 million to support developing countries to implement the WTO TFA over a 3-year period. She underlined that the programme aimed at helping with the identification of needs and building capacity for the implementation of the TFA. The HMRC run this programme in partnership with UNCTAD and the WCO. UNCTAD has been provided support to NTFCs through the Empowerment Programme for NTFCs, whereas the WCO has been provided the Customs technical assistance through the Mercator Programme.
23. Mr. Andreas Schaumayer (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany) presented the support granted by the German Government for the implementation of the WTO TFA. According to Mr. Schaumayer, the Government of Germany had increased their financial contribution to trade facilitation technical assistance initiatives in the last years. This assistance focused on the following areas: i) implementation of Category C designations, ii) creation of trade portals in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and East African Community (EAC); and iii) enhancement of a regional approach in the implementation of the WTO TFA. Finally, he encouraged NTFCs to engage with the private sector and pointed out that the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation could help to reinforce the public –private dialogue in the NTFCs.
24. Mr. Mark Henderson (European Commission, EU) informed that the EU have mobilized important financial sources (around 120 million euros) to support developing and LDCs with the implementation of the WTO TFA. He added that the EU was looking forward to introducing trade facilitation assistance in Aid for Trade programmes. Mr. Henderson requested NTFCs to incorporate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the trade facilitation projects since the feedbacks obtained from these mechanisms would provide important information for the NTFC members and donors.
25. Mr. Guy Platton (European Commission, EU) mentioned that the Trade Facilitation initiatives were incorporated into the Aid for Trade Strategy. The EU made the commitment to spend at least 400 million in trade facilitation over a 5-year period. He said that the EU had been investing those funds in different regions including Africa, Asia, and Latin American. Finally, he invited those countries interested in this assistance to contact the EU national or regional delegation.
26. Ms. Laila Clyne (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland) highlighted the importance of the WTO TFA for the developed and the developing world. She explained that trade facilitation represented a worthy investment and enabled the

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implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly women economic empowerment and good governance. Ms. Clyne added that Finland delivered technical assistance on trade facilitation bilaterally, but also through multilateral organizations and other regional programmes such as Trademark East Africa (TMEA) and the EIF.

27. The moderator took questions from the floor, and participants asked about procedures to access donor funds and the available assistance. Another participant raised the point that not all donors were present in the field, which made it very difficult to access their assistance. The panel replied highlighting that donors tried to cover all regions making synergies and avoiding duplications. Some stakeholders thanked UNCTAD for the Empowerment Programme for NTFCs from where they had benefited. Several participants emphasized the role of the private sector. Panelists confirmed that donors worked with the private sector as much as possible. Mozambique shared its experience in having a donor committee composed of public and private sector representatives. Panelists congratulated Mozambique on this initiative. The moderator concluded the session summarizing the key messages as follows: i) Enhance dialogue among all the stakeholders, in particular the private sector, ii) multiyear strategy approach, and iii) sharing the country experience.

VI. Session 4: NTFC around the world-main challenges and lessons learned from the UN repository on NTFCs

28. The moderator, Mr. Mohammand Saeed (ITC) opened the session recalling participants about existing tools on NTFCs to help countries in the establishment and maintenance of their NTFCs. These tools included: i) the NTFC recommendations and handbooks i.e. the NTFCs Guide issued by ITC, UNCTAD and UNECE, ii) trainings delivered by UNCTAD and ITC; and iii) the UN Repository on NTFCs around the world containing over 120 country-experiences.
29. Mr. Poul Hansen (UNCTAD) highlighted that having an NTFC would become an obligation upon the entry into force of the TFA. Therefore, countries should ensure the sustainability of their NTFCs. The UN repository and UNCTAD experience could help developing countries on this endeavor. He showed the different features of the UN Repository on NTFCs around the world, aimed at sharing best practices among countries. According to the latest data available at the repository, 70% of NTFCs were formally established, while 20% were de facto established. Finally, he shared some recommendations learned from a UNCTAD study, standing out the importance of work plan as well as the involvement of the private sector.
30. Ms. Maria Ceccarelli (UNECE) presented the Recommendations and guidelines developed by UN/CEFACT, namely Recommendation No. 4 (recently updated in 2015), Recommendation No. 40 on Consultation approaches, Guide for drafting a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap among others. She also announced that UN/CEFACT would soon issue the Recommendation No. 41 on Public-private partnership for NTFCs. Finally, she informed that UNECE in collaboration with UNCTAD and ITC created the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG), an online tool providing guidance and best practices on different trade facilitation topics, including NTFCs.
31. Participants appreciated and acknowledged the contribution of UNCTAD, ITC and UNECE in the establishment of their NTFCs. They also asked about financial resources to make NTFCs sustainable. Panelists replied that the private sector could be a source of financial resources, thus the NTFCs should involve the private sector. The moderator closed the session highlighting two indispensable elements for a successful NTFC: i) Private sector participation and ii) ensuring sustainable financial resources.

VII. Session 5: The role of regional organizations in the implementation of trade facilitation reforms

32. The moderator Ms. Joy Kategekwa (UNCTAD) welcomed participants to the session with a summary of the key message conveyed by the head of UNCTAD, WTO and ITC. She emphasized that the focus should be on the

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implementation and NTFCs played a critical role. Then, she invited panelists to provide information on how regional organizations could contribute to the implementation of the WTO TFA.

33. Mr. Youssouf Kone (African Development Bank-AFDB) highlighted the potential of WTO TFA to increase competitiveness in Africa, where trade procedures were longer and more expensive than in other regions. He added that different regional integration initiatives in Africa greatly depended on streamlining trade procedures. Thus, the AFDB supported countries in elaborating their Trade Facilitation strategies and the coordination among them.
34. Mr. Aly Ibouira Moussa (African Union) affirmed that regional organizations played an important role in the following areas: i) Championing regional Approach to Trade Facilitation Reforms, ii) Facilitating the exchange of information, iii) Rationalization of resources/economies of Scale. He suggested that regional organization could also collaborate and coordinate in the establishment of regional trade facilitation committees.
35. Mr. Mario Apostolov (UNECE) underlined regions did better once they invested in trade facilitation. He also recalled that the WTO TFA encouraged the use of international standards for trade facilitation; albeit countries would need capacity building to implement international standards. He shared some key elements that could ensure a successful implementation: i) private sector participation, ii) strong structure, and iii) constant financial resources.
36. Mr. Sebastian Herreros (UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean-UNECLAC) pointed out that NTFCs in Latin American were in an early stage of development. In a recent survey to 19 countries, UNECLAC found that only 3% of countries fully implemented NTFCs, while 42% of countries partially implemented those committees. He concluded that technical assistance was still needed to face main challenges (avoiding duplication, ensuring adequate human and financial resources, effective monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms among others).
37. The moderator invited participants to provide comments and questions. The representative of ECOWAS shared the experience on trade facilitation regional coordination in the framework of the Task Force on ECOWAS Trade Liberalization. The presentative of Mozambique underlined that high-level leadership increased the chances to adopt and implement effective decisions, pursuant Mozambique national experience. Finally, the moderator closed the session by listing the areas where the regional organization could support to the implementation of the WTO TFA: i) identification of needs, ii) mobilization of financial resources, iii) regional coordination, iv) ensuring public-private dialogue, and v) attracting political will.

VIII. [Session 6: How to ensure coordination of national and regional NTFCs and agendas](#)

38. The moderator Mr. Manuel Henriques (WBG) opened the session highlighting that the aim was to better know about regional initiatives on the ground.
39. Ms. Ulrika Lyckman (Sweden) shared the experience of the Swedish National Committee on Trade Facilitation, created in the 50's. She commented that SWEPRO was composed of 20 high-level members who meet twice per year. According to Ms. Ulrika, SWEPRO also coordinated on ad hoc basis with the EU. She affirmed that public-private dialogue and transparency were the key successful factors to ensure a productive and effective NTFCs. Other countries with existing NTFCs in the EU were Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Finland, and Greece.
40. Mr. Samuel Chemisto (Kenya) also shared the experience of the Kenyan NTFC. The latter met quarterly and was composed of 60 members from the public and private sector, who made decisions by consensus. As to the structure, one representative of the Ministry of Trade was the chair, while one representative from the private sector was the co-chair. He mentioned that the Kenyan NTFC coordinated with other members of the East African Community (EAC) at the regional level to avoid duplications and ensure synergies. This regional approach also ensured more support from and international partners such as UNCTAD and TMEA.
41. Ms. Hermie George (WCO) provided some guidelines to ensure stakeholder engagement at the national and the regional level. She explained six modes to have relevant stakeholders on board in NTFCs, namely informing,

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consulting, involving, collaborating, empowering and monitoring. She asserted that these modes would enhance transparency, participation, and ownership of relevant stakeholders. To conclude, Ms. George advised participants to invest in stakeholder engagement to ensure the achievement of organizational objectives

42. Mr. Javier A. Gutierrez (Central American Integration System) presented the experience of the Inter-regional coordination mechanism in Central America. He described the public-private composition of the mechanism and affirmed that the private sector played a key role in the validation of actions. As to future projects, Mr. Gutierrez announced the elaboration of a regional roadmap on single window aimed to allow the interconnectivity between national single windows and a regional risk management assessment. He concluded with three key pieces of advice to NTFCs, namely: to enhance constant interagency dialogue, to provide a clear and coherent mandate and to ensure donor cooperation.
43. Ms. Emmanuella Hakizimana (EAC) commented about the process of establishing NTFCs and regional coordination in the EAC. She announced that all partner States have established NTFCs counting with terms of reference and national action plans elaborated with UNCTAD and GIZ support. She also proclaimed that the EAC established in 2015 the Regional Sub-Committee on Trade Facilitation, which worked in cooperation with NTFCs of each EAC Partner State and supervised the implementation of the WTO TFA at the regional and national level. Finally, Ms. Hakizimana shared some future activities, including capacity building activities, and liaising with donors.
44. The moderator opened the floor for questions. Some participants requested further information on how to access to the WCO Stakeholder engagement training and in which languages it was available. Ms. Hermie George (WCO) replied that all information was available on the WCO website and the Mercator programme, which included the stakeholder engagement training could be delivered with interpretation. The moderator thanked panelists and participants and closed the session.

IX. [Session 7: How to formally establish and sustain an NTFC](#)

45. The panel was opened by the Moderator, Mr. Bismark Sitorius (UNCTAD), who said that the session would present examples on how to establish and sustain an NTFC while underlining that these advices must be considered and adapted to the specific context of each country.
46. The session started with an intervention from Mr. Poul Hansen (UNCTAD), who presented some general recommendations on how to facilitate the establishment and ensure sustainability of the NTFC. He mentioned the benefits of institutionalizing the NTFC, having a legal instrument, publicly announce its establishment and the importance of drafting a Terms of Reference (ToR). He invited delegates to consult UNCTAD's repository for NTFCs covering issues such as the composition of Committee members, ways of arranging chairmanship, rules for decision-making etc. He emphasised the benefits of establishing technical working groups linked to the NTFCs in charge of coordinating issues such as Single Window. Finally, he provided some data on the structure and composition of Committees.
47. The panel continued with a presentation by Mr. Ali Giddo (Working Group on Trade Facilitation in Sudan) who shared Sudan's experience of establishing their NTFC. This process started in 2007 when the Sudan experienced a congestion of imported goods in the sea ports. In 2009, the National Working Group on Trade Facilitation (NWGTF) had been established. This Working Group was responsible for monitoring Sudan's national plan on TFA implementation, drafted in 2011 with the support of UNCTAD, raising awareness on TFA related topics, coordinating the establishment of Single Window and carrying out Time Release Studies etc. In terms of lessons learned, he highlighted insufficient financial and human resources, the importance of having high-level political support, the crucial role of Customs and technical sub-groups.
48. The panel continued with a presentation by Mr. Mohammed Benayad (Ministry of Trade & Industry of Morocco). He shared Morocco's experience in setting up their NTFC, a process that started in 1986 with simplification and

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standardizing the port information system. This initiative evolved in 1997, with the launch of a pilot project in the Port of Casablanca. By the same time, Morocco also started the development of a Single Window together with a private stakeholder. He stressed that it was a complex process that took five years in total. He concluded by underlining the need for each country to take ownership of the process and make their own analyses. He also emphasized the negative effects of engaging a private stakeholder in the development of Single Window since this is a good of public interest. He mentioned the current success of the Single Window in Morocco and with increased number of available documents and users, and said that Morocco aims at having a throughout the paperless system in place by 2020.

49. The presentations were followed by questions from the floor. One delegate requested further information on experiences of establishing technical sub-Committees. Another delegate requested further information on how to effectively coordinate the work with different stakeholders when setting up a Single Window. The panelists confirmed the relevance of establishing technical sub-groups, stressed the importance of involving technicians in these groups and said that coordination with different stakeholders could be facilitated by establishing working groups.

X. Session 8: NTFCs Potential Problems and Pitfalls

50. The moderator, Mr. Manuel Henriques (WBG) opened the panel discussion and invited delegates to ask questions and provide observations.
51. Mr. Adamu Abdulhamid (National Trade Facilitation Committee of Nigeria) presented key factors that can facilitate the establishment and functioning of an NTFC including engaging relevant civil society representatives, adopting a clear mandate, establishing technical working groups linked to the Committee etc. In terms of challenges for the NTFC in Nigeria, he underlined inadequate financial resources, lack of TFA knowledge and lack of clarity of responsibilities between agencies. To conclude, he underlined the need to reform policies and legislation, gain high-level political support, increase TFA knowledge among Committee members and private sector stakeholders.
52. Mr. Komla Nyédji Galley, Director, External Affairs, Ministry of Commerce in Togo presented Togo's NTFC experience which initially started in 2009 and led to the formal establishment of the NTFC in 2016. He stressed that Togo's NTFC is permanent, has operational autonomy and a separate institutional framework. He said that civil society stakeholders are not represented in the Committee, but that consumers' groups sometimes provide inputs on issues such as the costs of goods. In terms of challenges faced, he mentioned the nomination process of the Chair, availability of representatives, commitment from government agencies, implementation of new working approaches, inadequate financial and human resources and need for training.
53. Mr. Nathan Taylor, Programme Manager at the WCO, presented WCO's experiences of supporting NTFCs including organizing TFA familiarization events, joint engagement with UNCTAD, delivery of customs-to-customs support and the work of the WCO TFA Working group and Capacity Building Committee. Furthermore, he presented key considerations that could support trade facilitation including the need to share information and gathering data, providing support to raise technical and TFA-knowledge, the need to analyze processes and developing firm relationships with relevant stakeholders. He presented instruments and tools developed by the WCO to support this work such as the Time Release Study, the Risk management compendium, the Coordinated Border Management compendium etc. To conclude, he stressed that continuous professional develop through competency-based management is needed and that the WCO could provide best practices in many areas to ensure alignment with international standards. He underlined the need for greater formalization and the importance of political commitment to achieve reform and modernization.
54. The presentations were followed by a discussion with delegates. Several delegates underlined the need to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and the importance of conducting Time Release Studies. One observer (ADB) underlined the lack of technical capacities and the need to nurture these capacities by establishing a mechanism to manage knowledge. Furthermore, he stressed the importance of keeping the Single Window a public

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entity. One delegate highlighted the importance of sustainability and mentioned the need to link knowledge-based planning to implementation, the importance of political will and to connect national plans to the work of the NTFCs. Finally, the issue of sustainable financial support for trade facilitation was raised.

XI. Session 9: How to engage the private sector in the work of the NTFC

55. The Moderator Mr. Mohammad Saeed (ITC) opened the session and presented the panel. He stressed that business are uniquely positioned to inform the policy makers on the realities of trading but the challenges on how to engage the private sector in these discussions remains.
56. Ms. Donia Hammami (International Chamber of Commerce) discussed why it is necessary and to involve business in the trade facilitation process. She started by emphasizing that trade facilitation aims at enabling more transparent, efficient trade flows which is also the objective of businesses. She highlighted that trade facilitation generates strengthened national competitiveness and underlined that businesses have an important role to play in terms of identifying trade obstacles. Furthermore, she emphasized that the private sector was one of the main drivers behind the TFA both in terms of ratification and implementation. She concluded by stressing that the TFA is a win-win agreement for all stakeholders and requested representatives to consult with the private sector in the process when making the A, B, and C categorizations. Finally, she underlined that there was still a need for further awareness-raising.
57. Mr. Babar Badat (National Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee of Pakistan), shared his experiences of participating in trade facilitation discussions. He stressed that due to lack of understanding it had been a challenge encouraging the government to engage more with the private sector. He underlined the need to find the right people that were engaged both in policy and processes and for the government to create an enabling environment for the private sector to take part. He also stressed that the private sector also has a responsibility to engage more widely. Finally, he concluded by stressing that gaining support for trade facilitation is a constant challenge both for developing and developed countries and made a reference to current political developments.
58. Ms. Patricia Francis (Trade Facilitation Task Force of Jamaica) was invited to share the key challenges faced when engaging the private sector in the implementing and monitoring of trade facilitation. She stressed that only 20 % of the trade crossing the port in Jamaica was for internal trade and that all ports and airports except for one were private sector controlled. She emphasized the need for global and competitive business and highlighted the private sectors interest in this. In this context, the Trade Facilitation Taskforce was created to provide an opportunity for the private sector to participate and to balance the public and private interests. She continued by presenting some of the main challenges including creating an environment to foster trust, bridging conflicting interest within the private sector, building a collective ownership, ensuring that representatives are contributing to the process to deliver results.
59. Mr. Adamu Abdulhamid (National Trade Facilitation Committee of Nigeria) was also invited to respond to the question on how business companies could bring value to the NTFC in Nigeria. He stressed that the private sector umbrella organizations in Nigeria were well organized but were lacking TFA knowledge. He said that they were brought into the process at an early stage and given a critical role in the NTFC. Before developing the ToRs, private sector stakeholders were also invited to provide detailed contributions on specific issues since they were the ultimate beneficiaries and users. He concluded by underlining that this had allowed creating a transparent process in which the private sector gained ownership, confidence and were fully involved since the beginning.
60. Mr. Smith (Namibia) shared the main challenges faced in fostering fruitful public-private collaboration. In Namibia, this process emerged from a need to facilitate cross-border transit and eventually evolved to cover TFA. Namibia therefore clearly had to define the role of the private sector and develop the way forward at an early stage of the process. To cope with the many priorities and stakeholders, Namibia decided to set up a Trade Forum which constitutes a platform for exchange between all stakeholders.

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61. Mr. Stephen Morris, (International Federation of Freight Forwarders Association-FIATA) was invited to share his experiences on how to actively involve the logistic industry in the discussions on trade facilitation. He started by underlining that trade facilitation is about competitiveness and not about political interests. He highlighted that stakeholder engagement needs to involve real collaboration, coordination, and participation, not just consultation for ticking boxes. He mentioned several challenges such as competing interests, lack of cohesion, lack of continuity of investment etc. He concluded by underlining that a change of mind-set is needed on who to involve in trade facilitation discussions. He also stressed that NTFC-members need further training on the TFA and its benefits for driving economic growth.
62. Ms. Donia Hammami (ICC) acknowledged that NTFCs comes in many different forms but that they all needed to include active contribution of the private sector. She recognized that NTFCs must go beyond individual conflicts of interest that sometimes arise between different business groups. She agreed that the government plays an important role in raising awareness of the TFA. She also underlined the benefits of establishing technical sub-groups and recommended engaging private sector in these groups which could have a dual impact in terms of knowledge contribution and strengthened ownership.
63. Mr. Stephen Morris (Customs Affairs Institute) stressed that sustainable engagement of the private sector is essential for the well-functioning of the NTFC. Moreover, he underlined that capacity building should include the private sector.
64. Mr. Adamu Abdulhamid (Nigeria) stressed the need for a strong political commitment from the government to facilitate public and private sector collaboration. He stressed that Nigeria's NTFC has established a roadmap to set out guidelines on decision-making collaboration with private sector. He stressed the need for the private sector to be actively involved in every step of the process and that international donors and the government must give incentives to encourage this involvement.
65. Mr. Smith said that Namibia have a system of rotating chairmanship shared by Customs, the public - and the private sector to ensure the real participation of different groups.
66. Mr. Babar Badat, Managing Director of Transfreight Corp and member of the National Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee in Pakistan highlighted the benefits of having an NTFC and making use of it as a conflict resolving platform relevant for all stakeholders which is the case of Pakistan.
67. Ms. Patricia Francis stressed the importance of awareness raising on the benefits of the TFA, not only for the economy but also for the private sector in terms of strengthened competitiveness and transparency. She also emphasizes the need for the private sector to take ownership and be involved as an equal stakeholder. She concluded by underlining the importance of developing a communication strategy and disseminate information to the public, both to gain credibility, confidence and as a mean of ensuring sustainability.
68. The panel interventions were followed by questions from the floor. Several delegates recognized the need for firm collaboration and engagement from both the public and the private sector. However, several delegates also addressed challenges. Several delegates requested advice on how ensure more efficient collaboration with the private sector and how to manage possible conflicts. One delegate also asked how to maintain the engagement for trade facilitation once the TFA comes into force.
69. The panelists stressed that building a well-functioning collaboration between the public and the private sector takes time and requires trust and mutual understanding of the benefits of working together. Moreover, the panelists underlined that the engagement also depends on the unique contexts of businesses in each country. One panelist highlighted that the uniqueness of the TFA and the fact that it will enter into force, always needs to be communicated when exchanging with the private sector. Regarding continuity, panelist highlighted the need to engage members with the right competence and the responsibility of governments to raise TFA-knowledge and ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are engaged in the process.

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70. The moderator concluded by underlining that a proactive approach and trust is needed from both the public and the private sector. Furthermore, he said that processes must be inclusive, coordinated and comprehensive. He highlighted the importance of NTFC members to be equipped with the right competence and finally that this could be achieved with a proper communication strategy and capacity building.

XII. [Session 10: How to engage effectively with other border agencies in a coordinated border management context](#)

71. The moderator, Mr. Nathan Taylor (WCO), presented the panelists and outlined the session, which started with a general presentation of the CBM concept followed by practical examples of border management reforms from Pakistan, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. He invited panelist to relate how the work on CBM could be linked to the work of NTFCs.
72. Ms. Hermie George (WCO) presented the concept of Coordinated Border Management, a coordinated approach seeking efficiency of management flows while accomplishing standards. She referred to the Article 8 of the TFA which emphasizes collaboration and the importance of establishing a one-stop border posts (OSBP). She highlighted the benefits CBM including cost-efficiency, reduced delays, enhanced risk management, policy cohesion, increased accountability, and transparency. She explained how CBM contributes both to generating trade benefits and strengthened cooperation through leveraging capacities and sharing resources. She mentioned crucial factors to succeed in implementing CBM including a political and organizational will, establishing the right legal framework and engaging relevant stakeholders. She underlined the importance of establishing a CBM Steering Committee in charge of coordinating necessary reforms related to laws, IT-infrastructure, processes, HR, and training. She stressed that carrying out a CBM diagnostic mission is vital to start the process. She also emphasized the importance of international cooperation. She underlined that the instruments and tools developed by WCO aiming at helping Members to implement the CBM emphasizing the WCO CBM Compendium.
73. Mr. Nathan Taylor (WCO) emphasised the question of shared resources and work, the idea of establishing a CBM Steering Committee, how this Committee would relate to the work of the NTFC and the importance of formalizing the interplay between these two committees.
74. Mr. Ghulam Ahmad (Federal Board of Revenue of Pakistan) presented how Pakistan had benefitted from the WCO's approach of CBM and highlighted the importance of communication between domestic and international border management. He explained how national border agencies and neighboring border agencies are collaborating and have aligned for instance their system of procedures and formalities, are sharing information and intelligence, conducts joint inspections, and have established one-stop border post controls (OSBPs). Regarding challenges, he mentioned structuring inter-agency cooperation, infrastructure development, coordinate priorities of different agencies and establishing OSBP with neighboring countries. He emphasised the need for continued capacity building and training. Finally, he concluded by presenting some of the most important results such as higher efficiency, reduced delays and trade costs, elimination of transit fraud and growth of revenue.
75. Ms. Edina Mudzingwa (Zimbabwe National Trade Facilitation Committee) continued the session by presenting the experiences from Zimbabwe in implementing CBM, carried out in collaboration with the WCO through the Mercator Programme. She underlined that modernization is a collective learning process involving all stakeholders. The Mercator programme collaboration had started with a scoping mission that allowed identifying gaps and prioritizing measures that could support Zimbabwe's TFA implementation. Some of the areas identified included CBM, supporting Zimbabwe's NTFC, Risk Management, improving public-private stakeholder dialogues and consultations with border agencies.
76. Mr. Dingani Banda (Customs Service Division of Zambia) presented Zambia's experience of establishing the One Stop Boarder Post (OSBP) at the Chirundu river border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. He stressed that the process

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started in 2007 as a pilot project collaboration between the two countries. He presented the different steps undertaken including constructing modern border infrastructure, the establishment of a legal framework, harmonizing procedures and formalities and sharing border facilities. He stressed the challenges related to automation of all stakeholders and emphasized the significance of ICT and internet connectivity. Moreover, he underlined the importance of team work, the necessity of environmental consideration, training and awareness raising for all stakeholders. In terms of challenges, he highlighted lack of connectivity of the ASYCUDA systems, multiply of government agencies, lack of adequate ICF equipment, misaligned infrastructure affecting traffic flows etc. He concluded by stating that Zambia would like to replicate the Chriundu experience to other border posts in the country.

77. The presentations were followed by active discussions with the delegates. One observer (ADB) highlighted that one of the biggest challenges to implementing CBM is ICT and internet-access to enable sharing of information. Another delegate mentioned challenges related to interagency cooperation such as the need to align legislation and the fear of different agencies to lose revenue, concerns related to managing intelligence and questions related to the alignment of existing ICT-platforms. Several delegates asked for further information on how countries had coordinated their Single Window implementation. Other issues addressed included funding of necessary border infrastructure.
78. Panelist underlined the need to establish a Steering group in charge of CBM implementation involving representatives from all stakeholders. Panelists also recommended establishing technical working groups that can report back on the implementation of specific the measures of the CBM. Furthermore, panelists recognized that ICT access is crucial and highlighted the importance of communication through joint border committees. Finally, the moderator concluded that a common feature needed was trust, both between agencies within and between countries.

XIII. [Session 11: How to lead and guide your NTFC in the process of National Trade Facilitation Roadmap](#)

79. Ms. Arantzazu Sanchez (UNCTAD) introduced the session by drawing parallels between a good road trip which required a good driver and a good GPS; with that of a country's Trade Facilitation reforms which requires a good National Trade Facilitation Committee and a Trade Facilitation Roadmap.
80. Ms. Maria Teresa Pisani (UNECE) gave an overview based on the UNECE's Guide to drafting a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap 2015, which provided a tailor-made methodology, practical recommendations and lessons learned. She explained what a Roadmap should and should not be, and gave a case study of Greece where the guide was successfully applied as the parliamentary approved "Greek TF Roadmap 2013-14", leading to significant measurable results, as seen by the improvement of the World Bank Group's Doing Business and Logistic Performance Index rankings.
81. Mr. Poul Hansen (UNCTAD) described the process of drafting a Roadmap, namely that there were three phases: first, the initiation phase where the mandate was set and a drafting team was established; second, the conception phase which focus on stakeholder engagements, identification of issues and action plan, and establishment of goal performance indicator; and, third, a validation phase where stakeholders approved the roadmap.
82. Mr. Poul Hansen (UNCTAD), Ms. Pamela Ugaz (UNCTAD), Ms. Arantzazu Sanchez (UNCTAD) and Mr. Julian Fraga-Campos (UNECE) described what a TF Roadmap should contain, namely: 1. Vision statement; 2. Baseline status; 3. Goals (and performance indicators); 4. Activities (and activity compliance indicators); 5. Schedule of implementation; 6. Governance structure; 7. Resources; 8. Risks and Assumptions. A vision statement must summarize objectives and benefits and must agree on a timeline. Effective baseline gathering customized for each country provides essential information on the current situation and the main challenges to address. Goals must be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. Activities must be sequenced and prioritized. Governance structure can vary by country depending on the country-specific situation but an NTFC should be part of the government structure, or at least actively supported by the Government. Both financial and human resources

are needed for the management and steering of the implementation of the TF reforms, and that there are risks and assumptions that one must be aware of throughout the process.

83. Mr. Mohamed Adam Ibrahim (Government of Sudan) shared the experience of Sudan in drafting a roadmap. In particular, he said that Sudan used the following five 'C's in drafting the Roadmap, namely: Cooperation, Coordination, Consultation, Consensus, and Commitment. He also highlighted that private sector participation is very important, and that in the case of Sudan, the Chamber of Commerce had been involved since 2011.

XIV. [Session 12: How to draft project proposals and adapt them to different donors](#)

84. The session began with an introduction of the standard requirements for project plans by Ms. Iris Hauswirth (ITC) who explained that while the templates may vary, all funders are essentially looking for the same set of things. A project should be defined by its objective; and the timeframe and budget within which the prescribed actions are to take place. A project proposal was essentially a plan of action which must be able to convince funders that it would fulfill the stated objectives, achieve results, and be cost effective in its interventions.
85. Moderator Mr. Nathan Taylor (WCO) summarized the process of developing project proposal as a process of convincing someone that the proposed intervention has a system in place that can be verified. As the next presenter, he continued to speak about Results based Management. He described it as a tool for planning, monitoring and evaluation. A life cycle approach must be taken to improve decision making, transparency and accountability. He emphasized the importance of various types of performance indicators to monitor outcome or impact; input or activity; output; efficiency; effectiveness; holistic, direct, and indirect indicators. Performance Indicators must be aligned to strategic plans, must be clear and focused, regularly refined and robust. They should be linked to the organizations goals, tailored, and used for decision making purposes. He emphasized that each indicator conveys a story of change and that demonstrating this change is key in terms of being able to work within a results management framework.
86. Ms. Monica Mpairwe shared the experience of Uganda where Balanced Score Card (BSC) was used as both a resource mobilization and performance measurement tool. While the previous performance management tool only focused on revenue collection; the BSC was helpful in terms of helping the institution strike a balance between financial and non-financial aspects of performance management and overall organizational coherence.
87. During a follow-on Q&A session, Iris conveyed that BSC represents the understanding that it takes various aspects of performance to meet the overall objective of an institution. BSC is a monitoring system for the different aspects that an institution considers important for achieving their objectives. In conclusion, the speakers emphasized the importance of telling a convincing story and putting together an intervention chain, considering various perspectives (financial, client, staff) and bringing all stakeholders on board.

XV. [Session 13 The specific role of NTFCs in the evaluation and monitoring of TF reforms.](#)

88. The panelists shared with participants how a strong dynamic M&E foundation can ensure focus and sustainability of Trade Facilitation reforms. The session was moderated by Jan Hoffmann (UNCTAD)
89. Ms. Pamela Ugaz (UNCTAD) discussed the overall importance of monitoring and evaluation: while the former kept the project in track through the life of the project, the latter assessed whether all objectives were met by the end of the project. She added that having a strong M&E framework sent positive signals to donors regarding the project's transparency and accountability in terms of the use of project resources. Ms. Ugaz highlighted the importance of auditing projects and sharing the information among all stakeholders.
90. Mr. Giuseppe Di Capua (UNCTAD) demonstrated how the customs performance indicators can be monitored through the ASYPM tool.

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91. Mr. Rajesh Aggarwal (ITC) emphasized the important role of private sector participation in NTFCs. He emphasized that the private sector must recognize their government's objectives and invest in building ethical relations with them, and to make the best use of institutional arrangements that the WTO TFA provides in terms of maximizing private sector participation to facilitate trade.
92. Ms. Hermie George (WCO) discussed the two tools for monitoring and evaluation provided by WCO: Time Release Study; and, the SAFE Framework of Standards – Self-assessment Checklist. The TFA encourages countries to undertake Time Release Study and publish their average release times. It measures the efficiency and effectiveness of flow process of cargo to identify bottlenecks; establish baselines, and identify opportunities for improvement. On the other hand, the objective of WCO self-assessment checklist was to provide customs administrations with an evaluative tool that would assist in identifying their needs and a foundation for undertaking more comprehensive customs reform and modernization using the WCO diagnostic.
93. The panelists emphasised Monitoring and Evaluation as an ongoing exercise that needed to be carefully developed and nourished to get the most out of program strategy, objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and reforms.

XVI. [Session 14: The role of NTFCs in the future of Trade Facilitation](#)

94. The moderator Manuel Henriques (WBG) opened the panel discussion by reminding the participants about the crucial role of the NTFCs in the future of trade facilitation and by inviting the panelists to present the different programmes and initiatives supporting and necessitating the continuing work of the NTFCs.
95. Ms. Hermie George (WCO) presented the tools of the WCO helping to manage the complexity of cross-border procedures, the aim of which was to reach the core objectives of the TFA, namely the reduction of time of trade, enhancing cooperation between government agencies and the private sector, as well as building the capacity of developing countries. Single window was a specific example of such a tool as it helps to reduce duplication and redundancy of information. Its utilization requires breaking silos and collaboration between self-interested agencies and functions, and this is supported by coordinated border management (CBM). The single-window strategy was one of continuous updating, monitoring and improvement and should not be approached as a one-off project.
96. Mr. Giuseppe Di Capua (UNCTAD) followed up by emphasizing the importance of customer-centricity as well as the simplification of procedures as the basis of all one-stop shop systems. He reminded the division of the success factors of the maintenance of such E-Systems being 70% people, 20% procedures and 10% technology.
97. Mr. Frank Grozel (UNCTAD) focused on how trade portals fulfil the requirements of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, specifically Article 1 focusing on Publication and Transparency. He presented the functions of two trade portals, namely the Bangladesh and Kenya Trade Portals.
98. Ms. Juliet Wangeci Muchiri (WBG) followed by showing in detail the functions of the latter portal, the steps through which traders can access information and communicate with the relevant sections responsible for the different areas of cross-border trade.
99. Mr. Pierre Bonthonneau (ITC) presented a new joint trade portal project with UNCTAD that aims to fulfil the objectives of three TFA articles, and builds on the vast data gathered by UNCTAD and ITCS. Its objective is to make single window useful beyond the TFA articles and actively supports public-private dialogue. The portal is owned by the country that operates it, ideally the NTFC who oversees and actively updates the information, allowing for dynamic data-sharing. A portal is only a tool for providing an ongoing continuous service, and should ultimately contribute to the overall objective of simplifying border procedures.
100. The moderator took questions from the floor, and participants raised issues such as the importance of focusing on trade facilitation issues beyond the articles of the TFA, and that both national and global level information is useful for users of trade portals. Attendees also asked about the specific challenges in setting up the trade portal in Kenya

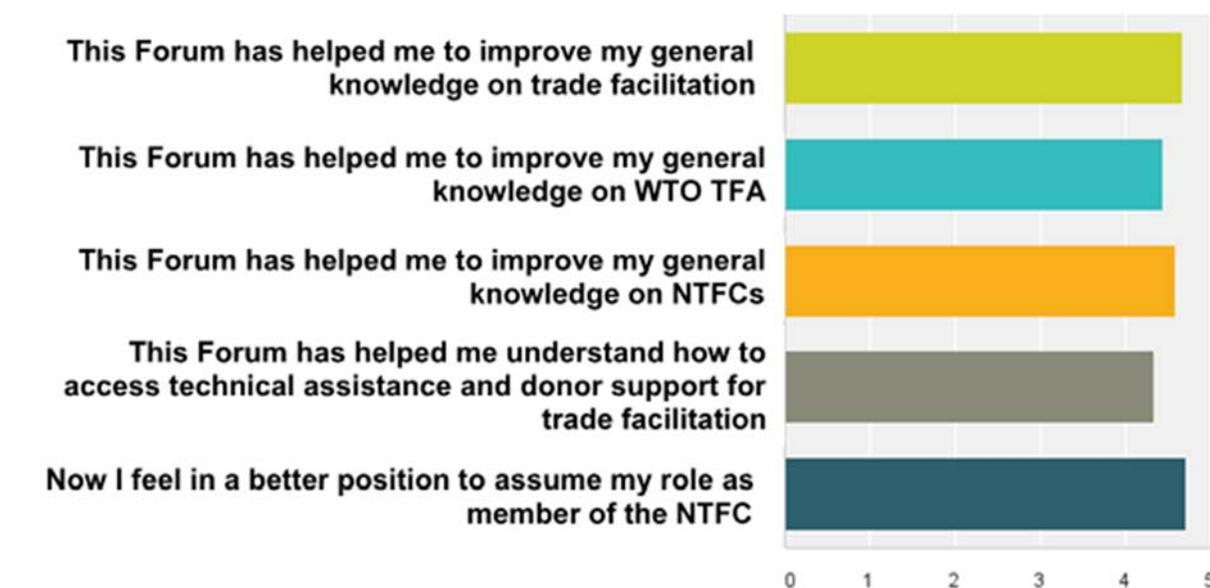
and whether there were plans to translate the contents into different local languages. The challenge of reliable internet connectivity was raised by one participant but it was concluded that there are rapid improvements in access to the internet and those other ways to reach the information for example through print-outs and manuals. A panelist also reminded that the trade portal must be based on a two-way dynamic of government/NTFC hosting and providing the information, and the private sector having the opportunity to comment, question and give feedback - contributing to the wider public-private dialogue mandated by the TFA.

XVII. Closing remarks

101. Mr. Jan Hoffmann (UNCTAD) opened the last session of the forum, giving the floor first to Ms. Aicha Pouye (ITC) who emphasised the role of SMEs-who often carried the largest costs and highest risks in cross-border trade-as key beneficiaries of trade facilitation reforms. ITC recommended that NTFCs proactively support the participation of SMEs and collect output from SMEs.
102. Manuel Henriques (WBG) affirmed that trade facilitation is not about large government agencies but ultimately about allowing the end-users and traders to make a living. The panelist also observed that the group of organizers both collaborate and compete in furthering trade facilitation. This dynamic allowed for both continuous improvement and specialization, as well as a stronger sense of initiative and convening power by the international agencies.
103. Mr. Nathan Taylor (WCO) emphasised the importance of donor coordination and sustained participation of private sector. By presenting the core streams of WCO's work he shed light on both the technical expertise as well as soft skills assistance in customs management. A growing foundation of trust was needed when developing public-private dialogue.
104. Ms. Sheri Rosenow (WTO), gave brief remarks on the fruitful outcomes of the week and especially the bilateral collaboration and regional cooperation that were discussed informally during the forum. Ms. Rosenow described plans to collect all requests for assistance and further coordinate programmes between the international agencies.
105. Mr. Jan Hoffmann (UNCTAD) concluded the panel presentations with three key insights emanating from the forum, namely the challenges related to the paradox of choice between all the forms of assistance offered by the international agencies and other organizations. Second, the panelist brought up the problem of the public good, evoking the challenge of permanent operation and funding of a good (i.e. the NTFC) that was seen as commonly useful and necessary. Finally, trade facilitation and enforcement should not be seen as trade-offs but rather specific reforms under the TFA help both: enforcement and the facilitation of international trade.

XVIII. Results of participant's survey

106. At the end of the Forum, participants were requested to fill in an online evaluation survey. A total of 162 participants answered the survey.
107. Participants were asked to rate the certitude of the following statements in a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results are shown in the table below.



108. Participants were asked to select the most useful sessions from the Forum. As shown in the graphic below, all sessions were highly appreciated by participants. The three most appreciated sessions were: 1) Session 11 on how to lead your NTFC to draft a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap, 2) Session 4 on NTFCs around the world - main challenges and lessons learned from the UN repository on NTFCs and 3) Session 7 on how to formally establish and maintained an NTFC.

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